

REMARKS

A. Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1 and 10 are herein amended. Claims 1–6, 9–15, and 18 are presented for consideration.

B. Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to claims 3, 4, 9, and 13 because of certain informalities. It is respectfully submitted that these objections are moot in view of the amendments herein, and reconsideration and withdrawal of these objections are therefore requested.

C. 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the final Office action of August 22, 2007, the Examiner rejected claims 1–6, 9–15, and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over U.S. patent no. 6,405,371 to Oosterhout *et al.* in view of U.S. patent no. 6,219,837 to Yeo *et al.* and further in view of U.S. patent no. 5,977,974 to Hatori *et al.* and further in view of U.S. patent no. 6,253,218 to Aoki *et al.* The rejections are traversed, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested in view of the following.

Claim 1 reads, in part, “wherein the focus area is maintained at a fixed position during the operation of the focus setting means.” It is respectfully submitted that none of the cited references, alone or in combination with any one or more of the others, teaches or suggests a focus area that maintains a fixed position during operation of a focus-setting means. It is therefore submitted that claim 1 is allowable over the cited art.

Independent claim 10 includes limitations that correspond to the cited limitations of claim 1, and it is submitted that claim 10 is therefore allowable for the same reasons as claim 1, as discussed above. Claims 2–6, 9, 11–15, and 18 each depend on one of independent claims 1 and

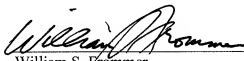
9, and it is submitted that these claims are therefore allowable based on their inclusion of allowable subject matter.

D. Conclusion

For these reasons, the applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejections and allow the claims. To expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call the applicant's undersigned representative to discuss any issues relating to this application.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: October 30, 2007

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William S. Frommer", is written over a horizontal line.

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